

# University of Leeds

## Research Culture Awards 2021-22

### Application Form

Please email nominations/self-nominations using this form to Holly Ingram [H.L.Ingram@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:H.L.Ingram@leeds.ac.uk) by Wednesday June 1<sup>st</sup>, 5pm

#### Information section

This section covers information about the lead applicant and the team as well as the chosen category of award. Expand the sections as necessary. The maximum number of people in a team is set to 10 for event planning and personal prize budgeting purposes.

#### 1. Select the nomination type

- Self-nomination
- ~~Third party nomination (you will need to secure the nominees' agreement for submission)~~
  - Nominator name:
  - Nominator School:
  - Nominator role/post:

#### 2. Lead applicant and team

Provide details about the applicant and the team (including external partners if applicable), and their contribution to the initiative. The lead applicant will be the contact person for the management of the award application.

Lead applicant name: Kylie Norman

Lead applicant contributor role: LIDA Data Scientist Development Programme Co-ordinator

Lead applicant Service or School / Faculty: Consumer Data Research Centre, School of Geography

Lead applicant role/post: Senior Operations Co-ordinator

Lead applicant career stage: Professional staff, G6

Team member name (include lead applicant)	Contributor role	School/Service/external organisation + role/post	If member deserves special mention, state reason (optional)
Kylie Norman	Programme Co-ordinator	Consumer Data Research Centre, School of Geography/ Leeds Institute for Data Analytics (LIDA)	Kylie oversees the day- to-day operations of the programme and was the driving force in bringing this positive action case to fruition. She delivers an important introduction to the Programme values during the Data Scientists' induction.
Dom Frankis	Director of Operations	Leeds Institute for Data Analytics (LIDA), FMH	

Michelle Morris	Programme Academic Advisory Group Co-chair	Leeds Institute for Medical Research (LIMR), FMH	
Nick Malleson	Programme Academic Advisory Group Co-chair	School of Geography	

Expand table as necessary; the upper limit for a team is 10 members.

3. Select the award category that best fits the research culture activity:

- ~~• Personal development, reward and recognition~~
- ~~• Open research and impact~~
- Equality, diversity and inclusion in research
- ~~• Responsible research and innovation~~
- ~~• A collegiate and supportive environment~~

## Case for Award

### 1. Championing recruitment for diversity on the LIDA Data Scientist Development Programme.

#### 2. Summary.

**Values-based recruitment** for diversity is at the heart of LIDA's interdisciplinary [Data Scientist Development Programme](#). This springboard programme creates **capacity-building opportunities** to develop graduates into effective data scientists. In 2021, the Programme **led a collaboration** between a funder and senior HR, EDI, and Legal colleagues to evidence and approve its first **positive action (PA) case** for under-represented black minorities, resulting in a **record-breaking 33% conversion** of black applicants to data scientists, in comparison with only 12% BAME employed within the whole of LIDA.<sup>1</sup> Acting as a "test case", the Programme demonstrates the importance of PA as a means to **diversity and quality-appointments within LIDA** and the University.

#### 3. Why?

The lack of diversity in the field of data science is shocking, resulting in a **large pool of untapped talent** in early career graduates or extant in the workforce. Additionally, there appears to be a **latent assumption in some areas of research culture** that PA recruitment lessens the **quality** of appointees. A catch-22 ensues whereby under-represented applicants do not apply for roles because they do not feel valued by them, and research culture doesn't always proactively demonstrate the intent to address this.

The Programme's mission statement, "Data Science for Public Good", runs through everything it does, including its interdisciplinary **values-based culture**, rooted in LIDA's belief in **innovation through collaboration**. The Programme employs a diversity of graduates (**BSc to PhD**) from a **range of disciplines** (quantitative and qualitative) to build unique cohorts of talent, where **each individual's difference represents their value**. This belief in **strength through diversity** is why the team seized the opportunity to work with one of its funders, Health Data Research (HDR) UK, to instate PA recruitment to address the **under-representation** of black people in data science. HDR UK's own Black Internship Programme (BIP) had already evidenced the ways in which this kind of PA recruitment could work, both by creating opportunities for access through **relatability**, but also by **broadening reach** into areas of untapped talent.

#### 4. What?

Firstly, Programme Co-ordinator Kylie liaised with the funder, HDR UK, to understand how their own BIP PA recruitment operates. This was LIDA's first PA case, which meant, secondly, **identifying key top-level University decision-makers** for approvals, drawn from Legal (Melanie Steed), EDI (Shelagh Prosser) and HR (Jo Squires) – and then **building a robust case for support**. Kylie **sourced data** to evidence the under-representation of black people within LIDA and the University more widely from the University's Management Information team, and then worked with HR and Legal to ensure compliance with the Equality Act and University policy in the job advert. Kylie then worked with local HR officers so that black applicants could easily self-select for the reserved post, whilst limiting recruitment bias and preserving shortlisting by merit. The 2021 PA case took seven months and tireless advocacy to agree and recruitment resulted in an unprecedented **33% conversion of black applicants to appointees**.

#### 5. How?

Building a **culture based on EDI** is primarily about **access and representation**: the ability to relate and identify with a role. PA recruitment is effective in both acknowledging under-representation and **signalling the intent to correct this** by providing the **opportunities** for identification. PA is both a **signifier of changed research culture** – a levelling up of opportunities – as well as **providing a pathway for systemic correction**. The team successfully realised their goal of more black candidates applying, and in doing so developed a **replicable PA recruitment workflow** for other academics and funders to follow, which will be **disseminated more widely** through a Research Culture case study. The positive impact of diverse, high-quality appointments to the programme, in terms of both talent and enhanced research culture, has already encouraged other affiliated academics and funders to **become EDI advocates themselves**, incorporating PA cases into their funding proposals.

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<sup>1</sup> See also employment data sourced from the [2019 annual population survey](#), broken down by ethnicity, for national evidence of BAME under-representation.

## **6. So What?**

The result of the 2021 PA recruitment was the **highest number of black data scientists** ever appointed to a Programme cohort – **2021-22: 33%**; 2020-21: 0%; 2019-20: 10%; 2018-19: 10% - in comparison with only 12% BAME employees within LIDA and 12% within FMH. A key success indicator for PA has been the demonstrable **increase in quality** on the Programme, evident from project PI feedback and the next destinations of recruits. For example, one of the applicants who self-selected for the post reserved for black applicants has already secured a permanent G6 Data Analyst role, supporting projects across LIDA's £60M research portfolio, and fed back, "The programme's mission statement – Data Science for Public Good – reminded me that I'm part of something bigger than myself, something fundamentally good: **a place where community and inclusivity was a hallmark.**" Another success indicator has been the way in which the data scientists have themselves **embodied the values of the Programme**, by delivering their own **Cultural Exchange Seminar** consisting of presentations on each of their home countries to further promote values of **inclusivity** and **strength through diversity**.

## **7. What Next?**

This Programme works with **all University departments and faculties** to raise awareness of its work, and has grown from a discrete, locally-funded scheme in 2016, to a **nationally-recognised Programme** which doubled its intake of data scientists in 2020-21. The Programme is ensuring a **future pipeline of research projects that will improve diversity through funder collaborations**. For example, Kylie worked with the recently-funded (£10M) Vulnerability & Policing Futures Research Centre to reserve £200k exclusively for PA recruitment on the Programme over the next five years. This strategic approach to **prioritising EDI through funding** utilises **LIDA's skills in brokering mutually-beneficial partnerships with funders**. Having **clearer systems and processes** in place to support PA recruitment will better facilitate this. This Programme's efforts have led to a **reproducible PA recruitment process**, soon to be **disseminated and promoted** in a Research Culture case study.

## **8. Challenges and how these were overcome.**

It was evident early on that the **clarity and confidence over exactly what evidence was needed to deliver PA recruitment were not yet in place** within the University, nor was there a systematic approach to implementing PA. It took four months of **intense negotiation** to arrive at a rationale, evidence and wording which satisfied HR, Legal and EDI staff. Kylie and Dom **drove these stakeholder meetings** to effect the PA case, and Kylie worked to source the evidence. Although the Management Information team helpfully provided the available data for the case, a **shortcoming of the University's recruitment data collection** is that much EDI data are unrecorded or not retained at the level of granularity that was necessary to evidence specific PA cases within discrete Programmes. Kylie's **solution to use data from HDR UK's BIP** in lieu of the missing data was accepted. In addition, Kylie noted that the University's library of recruitment images does not reflect the diversity it seeks to recruit, hindering applicants' ability to identify with the role. The team sourced a more diverse image of former Data Scientists from the LIDA image library.

## **9. Innovation / creativity.**

The Programme's PA recruitment has **set a precedent** across the University and more widely for how cases of **PA collaboration between funders and the University** can work in practice, and successfully demonstrates the **effectiveness of PA in reducing recruitment inequalities**. This **innovative** PA work acts as a **proof-of-concept** that **funder commitment, backed by evidence, creates a robust PA case for support**. By leveraging the endorsement, not only of colleagues in HR, EDI and Legal, but also a key strategic Programme funder, the team have now **proven a route to improving diversity** within the University, demonstrating values "from the ground up" and then **embedding these in a values induction** for each cohort. In addition, the Programme has **established a sustainable pipeline for recruiting skilled black data scientists** into LIDA from HDR UK's BIP, thereby consolidating an important relationship with a key partner.

## **10. A notable example of culture change.**

This was the first PA case for LIDA and the **first PA case at the University to secure the approvals of senior EDI, Legal and HR colleagues**. What excites us here is **how easily this can be replicated** across the University, where there is similar, provable under-representation and funder-backing. This Programme demonstrates an attitudinal shift in research culture that sees **reach and representation** through identification as a key part of improving not only **diversity** but additionally and crucially, **quality**. In the words of 2021 LIDA Data Scientist Eric Wanjau Muriithi, "We all want to do good work, but deep down I believe we also want our work to have meaning and **drive positive change.**"